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LETTERS

CONCERNING THE

MIRACLES

OF THE

S A I N T S ;

First PUBLISHED in the
Freeman's Journal,

On the 15th and 19th of APRIL,
and 20th of MAY, 1766.

*Mutare sententiam usque ad mortem possumus. Cui
enim non liceat omni tempore, relicto falso, verum
amplecti?*

Pope Pius II.

D U B L I N :

Printed by WILLIAM SLEATER, 1766.



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T W O

LETTERS, &c.

L E T T E R I.

To the *Committee* for conducting the *Free-Press*.


 BEG, leave to make use of your paper to congratulate with our country on the spirit which prevails, to a degree unknown till lately, of imparting knowledge to the public, on both sides of any important question, with the most laudable freedom. What benefit and improvement may we not expect from hence? Not only politics are dealt out, *pro* and *con*, with a most liberal hand, but Divinity is also propagated, on one side as well as the other, with great industry, and in great abundance. Not to mention news-papers enlisted in the Catholic cause, we have Manuals, Catechisms, Breviaries, Missals, Offices for the National Saints, Directories for Seculars and Regulars, &c. vended, not as heretofore, cautiously and clandestinely, like contraband goods (as they used to be accounted), but in broad day-light and in public shops, the bookseller no longer thinking it necessary to conceal his name, which now stands in capitals at the bottom of the title-page, with the place of his abode, to invite customers: Nay, so very communicative are the good Catholics become of late, that the Holy Bible itself, that dangerous book, which the wisdom and piety of the Church of Rome used to keep up as carefully as an apothecary keeps poison, putting it into the hands of such only as she was well assured would do no harm with it; that very book has of late appeared in English, *cum permissa*

superiorum. Think not, however, that the wisdom or piety of the church is at all diminished: For, in the first place, the price of the book is too high for the common people to purchase it; and secondly, their translation is not that plain edifying one, which *by his Majesty's special command is appointed to be read in Churches*, but that of *Douay and Rheims*, which, not being intended to be read in either churches or chapels, must be allowed to be made with no less skill than care; for, besides the notes, which palliate and explain away such practices as are most opposite to both the spirit and letter of the text, the language of the text itself, in many places, is on purpose made equally unintelligible, to the English reader, as their favourite, authentic vulgate, or the original Hebrew and Greek; whereby you see the authority of the Holy Church is still maintained, and scripture proved to be, what Catholic Doctors have sometimes thought fit to call it, *A nose of wax to be twisted this way and that at pleasure.* And thus the Catholic cause remains unhurt, which, I presume, is all that the most sanguine wishes of the editors could aim at; For, to reconcile Protestants to the Church of Rome by the *Bible*, in any *Translation*, is a project which they have doubtless too much sense to embark in. Other engines must be employed in *that* work, and other engines are at hand for the purpose.

Within these few months hath been published here in Dublin, a fair edition of Mr. Phillips's celebrated History of the Life of Cardinal Pole. The lustre of his Eminency's high birth, and the charity of Protestants, had hitherto screened his character from any very minute scrutiny: and if he now appears to have been an abject, pusillanimous, pedantic, persecuting tool of the Court of Rome, it is his panegyrist who has made the discovery, by bringing him out in too full a light. In the next work Mr. Phillips undertakes, with a view to make Profelytes, I would recommend him to be a little more careful in the choice of his hero. With good Catholics, he has already, we may

may be sure, laid in no small stock of merit, by the learning, the address and the zeal, which he has shewn in the cause; and though some Protestant Divines, who have examined the book, have proved his learning to be but mere Plagiarism, and his address but bold and groundless assertions, mangled and perverted quotations, or downright misrepresentations and falshood, yet his zeal must be allowed, on all hands, to be very extraordinary, since it has not only put him upon attempting to set off, in the brightest colours, the utility and excellency of the monastic life (now grown into discredit in the Catholic countries), but upon undertaking the apology and panegyric of *Ignatius Loyola*, founder of the *Jesuits*; an order which, whatever interest Mr. Phillips may have in it*, has been found unsafe for Princes, even of the Romish communion, to protect, or suffer to remain in their dominions: Nay, to such a length is he carried by his zeal, that he hath not despaired of exculpating his church from the charge of cruelty, in delivering over to death all those whom she finds guilty of differing from her in opinion; that most heinous of all sins, for which alone she grants no pardon or indulgence! What if, after all, he has not succeeded in his endeavours? The fault is certainly none of his: He has done his best:

Magnis tamen excidit ausis.

Not long before this great work came abroad, an edition, in folio, of the *Lives of the Saints* was

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printed.

* *Mr. Phillips* studied at *St. Omer* by the name of *Cross*; performed his noviciate, or probation of two years, at *Watten* about twelve miles from *St. Omer*; from thence he removed to *Leige*; at which place, whilst *Mr. Edmond Plowden* was Rector, he was expelled for irregularities so gross, that the sentence of *Excommunicatio major* was denounced from the pulpit in the refectory against any of the order who should converse with him.

printed here, for the edification of the pious Catholics, which, I presume, is entirely sold off, for I find a new work of the same kind, by Mr. Alban Butler, ~~being~~ advertised to be now in the press, which cannot but be worthy of the attention of the public, as it is highly recommended by the *ingenious* and *candid* Mr. Phillips before mentioned. My curiosity, I confess, is raised to the highest degree by that recommendation: I long exceedingly for its publication. In the mean time, in order to prepare my mind for all the benefit to be reaped from that masterly performance, I have turned over a good part of the Breviary, and made a few extracts of some striking passages in the lives of the more remarkable and distinguished Saints of the Holy Roman Church; and if Mr. Butler has been able to collect any authentic miracles, that exceed the following marvellous exploits, his saints must have most justly merited the high honour of canonization; and neither Catholic nor Heretic, with the least grain of modesty, can ever dispute the encomium bestowed upon him by his good friend Mr. Phillips.

The 30th of April is dedicated, with an half double office, to the honour of St. Catharine of Siena, whose history is related in the lesson of the day. She fasted from Ash Wednesday to Ascension Day, which is eighty-five days, being more than double the time of our Saviour's fast in the wilderness, and all that while took no sustenance but the sacrament†. She had frequent conflicts with devils, and suffered grievously by them in her own person, but had no difficulty to expel them out of others. Once upon a time, perceiving our Lord coming to her with great brightness, and five rays from his wounds pointing towards five parts of her body, she prayed that no scars might appear, and immediately the scars chang-
ed

† Query, Whether it were the *Flesh of Christ*, or the substance of the *Wafers*, that nourished St. Catharine?

ed their bloody colour into a bright one, and reached her hands, her feet and her heart, in the form of pure light, which her confessor took care to have represented in her pictures. Thus far the Breviary. But we are also told elsewhere of some other favours she received from Christ; that he appeared and married himself to her with a ring; that he opened her side, took out her old heart, and put in a new one instead of it; that he cloathed her with a bloody-coloured garment, drawn out of the wound in his side, so that she never felt any cold afterwards.

On the 16th day of May is celebrated a double office of the first class, by the whole order of Carmelites, in honour of their General St. Simon Stock, a native of Kent in England. Being twelve years of age, he left his parents (that is, ran away from his school), and hid himself in a hollow tree, living upon herbs, roots and wild apples, except that it pleased God, upon stated days, to send dogs to him with bread. In this kind of life, the Breviary tells us, he spent twenty years, and then having entered into the order of Carmelites, he was sent by his superiors to study at Oxford, but he could not be prevailed upon to take any but an inferior degree. However, he became a great writer, was chosen General of the Order, and was endowed with the gift of prophecy and working miracles. He cured incurable distempers, (*Morbos insanabiles curavit.*)

Some Fishes being once brought him *dressed* ready for his dinner, which he did not chuse to eat, he

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did

Catharine? If she was supported by the flesh of Christ, there must have been a *double transubstantiation*; first into the real and true flesh of Christ, and then into St. Catharine's flesh, of which it must have become a real and true part, if it contributed to her nourishment. On the other hand, if it was not Christ's body, but the wafer that nourished and fed her, then the wafer remained in its natural state, *without any transubstantiation at all.*

did but lift up his eyes to heaven, and they were instantly alive again. By the sign of the cross over some water, he turned it into wine, being more cunning than the Devil (*Superans Dæmonis Astutiam*) who stole away the wine that he had prepared for the sacrament. As he was once praying to the Blessed Virgin that she would distinguish his order, which was dedicated to her honour, by some privilege, she appeared to him, and holding out in her hands the scapulary of the order, (the Hymn says. she put it upon his shoulders) this, said she, shall be the privilege to all Carmelites, that whoever dies in a pious state in this scapulary, shall not suffer eternal fire. He was an hundred years old when he died. His dead body was taken up the third day, and after having done many other miracles, it spoke, (*Triduo functus loqueris Sepulchro.*)

The important virtues of the scapulary, are set forth in the Bull of John XXII. commonly called *Bulla Sabbatina*, or Saturday's Bull. "JOHN, Bishop and Servant of the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all and every the faithful, &c. While I was praying on my knees, the Virgin of Mount Carmel appeared to me, and spake unto me in these words:—O John, O John, vicar of my dear son, as I will deliver thee out of the hand of thine adversary, (the Emperor Lewis IV. whom he had excommunicated) and make thee Pope, so I will, that thou shouldest grant to my holy and devout Order of Mount Carmel, founded by *Elias* and *Elisha*, the grace of a full Confirmation, namely, that whosoever, being professed, will observe the rules given by my servant *Albert* the Patriarch, and approved of by my well-beloved *Innocent*, the true Vicar of my son, giving his consent upon Earth, to what my son has decreed in heaven, viz. That whosoever should persevere in that holy Obedience, Poverty and Chastity, and shall enter into this Order, shall be saved: And that any other men or women, whosoever shall enter into this holy religion, wearing the sign of the holy habit, (viz. the Scapulary) calling themselves

themselves by the name of Brethren and Sisters of the said Order and Confraternity, shall be delivered and absolved from the third part of their sins from the day of their admittance; promising withal, chastity if she be a widow, virginity if she be a maid, and conjugal fidelity if she be a married woman. And as to the professed Brethren of the said Order, they shall be delivered both from punishment and sin. And when they shall depart out of this world, making speed to Purgatory, I the glorious Mother of God, will come down thither the next Saturday after their death, and will rescue whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory, and bring them up to the holy hill of eternal life. But these Brethren and Sisters of the said Confraternity, must say the canonical hours after the rule of St. *Albert*; and if they be ignorant, they must abstain from eating flesh every Wednesday and Saturday, unless some necessity hinder them, except on my Son's nativity." Having said thus much that holy apparition vanished away. "Therefore I John aforesaid accept of this holy indulgence, and do confirm and strengthen it on earth, just as Jesus Christ hath, by the merit of his glorious Mother, granted it in heaven. Therefore let no man presume to annul or contradict this page or writ of our indulgence; or if he dare, let him know that he shall incur the indignation of God Almighty, and of his blessed Apostles Peter and Paul. Given at Avignon, Indiction 3d, the first Year of our Pontificate."

The sacerdotal pages of the Breviary also assure us that St. Michael appeared here on earth in the shape of a BULL, in order to obtain a small spot of ground whereon to build a church: In memory of which the Catholic Church keeps an annual festival with a double office, on the eighth day of May.

A rich couple in Rome, having no children, to whom to bequeath an affluent fortune, resolved to make the virgin Mary their sole heiress, and intreated the virgin to let them know in what manner she would have their money expended. The virgin

(as may be supposed) unwilling to lose so advantageous an offer, marked out by a great fall of snow, in the month of August, a time when the heats are most intense, the very spot on which she would have a church erected. A feast with a double office is in memory of this great miracle observed by the whole church, *guided no doubt by the spirit of truth*, on the fifth of August.

An angel came down from heaven to perform a chirurgical operation on the body of St. Francis, by impressing on the same the wounds of Jesus Christ; which was afterwards attended with this great inconveniency, that it frequently dirtied the saint's waistcoat and breeches; or in the words of the Roman Breviary, *Quod sæpe sanguinem sacrum effundens, tunicam & femoralia respergebat*.—A feast with a double office is kept, *by the holy and true church*, in memory of this great miracle, on the 17th day of September.

The truth of this miracle met with so early an opposition, as in the year 1237, from Frederick bishop of Olmuts, and Evehard a Dominican friar. As soon however as this opposition came to the knowledge of Pope Gregory the IX. he gave immediate orders that the Dominican should be severely punished, and in a letter directed to the bishop of Olmuts in particular, and to all the faithful of Germany, his holiness asserts the truth of St. Francis having miraculously received in his body the wounds of Jesus Christ; and at the same time avers, that it was the principal cause and motive of his canonization. The Pope's letters bear date in April, in the year 1237. [See Wading, Anno 1237.]

I shall add but one instance more from the same holy Breviary:—The 17th of November is a festival in honour of St. *Gregory-Thaumaturgus*, i. e. the *Wonder-worker*; a name to which, you will see, he was well entitled. Having a mind to build a church in a certain spot, very fit for the purpose (*in Loco apto*) but too much confined, on one side, by a rock on the

the sea shore, and on the other side by a mountain; he comes to the place by night, and kneeling down, prays to God to remove the mountain; and lo! next morning, as soon as it was light, he found it removed far enough to give the workmen full room for the building †. This saint was likewise famous for dispossessing devils from idols as well as men. He dried up a marsh, which had been the cause of some dispute amongst brethren; and he kept a river, which used to do great damage, from overflowing, by setting his walking stick in the bank, which immediately grew to be a flourishing tree, and the river never afterwards attempted to pass beyond it.

Such are the extravagancies which are not only taught, but made articles of faith in the church of Rome! being interwoven into the collects, hymns and lessons in the Roman Breviary; a book of such authority, that every priest of that church is obliged, under pain of damnation, to read a certain portion of it every day.

And now, should the foregoing extracts happen to fall into the hands of any serious Roman Catholic, it will not surely be too sanguine to hope, that he may be induced by them to consider how extremely contemptible, as well as incredible, the facts are, on account of which those male and female saints are appointed, by the Pope, to *assist* our blessed Saviour in his office of Mediator in Heaven. One would al-

† This Miracle is cited by *Bede* in the Lesson for the Day, in support of the literal sense of *St. Mark* xi. 13. But he soon recurs to a figurative interpretation of that Passage. However, saith he, by a mountain is to be understood the *Devil*, who by his Pride sets himself up against GOD, attempting to be like the Most High; and therefore a mountain is said to be removed and cast down, when by the preaching of sound Doctrine, the unclean spirit is driven from the heart.

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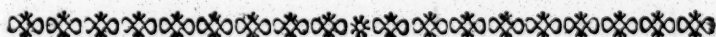
most be tempted to suspect, that the *Legendary History of Saints* was an artful contrivance of infidelity, compiled with a design profanely to burlesque and ridicule the holy miracles of the Gospel, in order to sap the foundations upon which the credibility of it is built. Or, if these strange fables be indeed the offspring of credulity, to what can such an insatiation be attributed, but to *the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they receive not the love of truth, that they may be saved? And for this cause, God hath sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.* 2 Thess. ii. 9. &c.

Behold thy Gods, O Israel! said Jeroboam to his people, when he set up the golden calves, in order to establish his own power, and to withdraw them from the worship commanded in the law of God. 1 Kings xii. 28. In like manner, and for much the same reason, saith the Church of Rome to her people, *These are they to whom you are to pray, and by whose merits and intercession you may expect health and salvation.* With a quite contrary and most friendly intention, I beg leave to address them in the same language: *Behold your Gods!* Behold to what kind of mediators you are taught to pay your devotions! And can you think them worthy of that respect! Are not the very exploits, for which many of them are said to be thus highly exalted, such as no rational man can either wish to resemble them in, or believe them to have performed? But were their lives never so exemplary and excellent, and the history of them never so credible; yet could they not be entitled to this honour. Neither the glorified spirits of just men made perfect (if that can be supposed before the resurrection) nor the highest archangel who stands before the throne of God, can be the object of your prayers. Your worship might, indeed, in that case, be less absurd and less disgraceful, but would not be less presumptuous, nor less sinful, there being not the least shadow of either command or example in the Holy Scriptures to countenance

tenance it. There we are expressly told, that *there is ONE GOD, and ONE MEDIATOR between God and Men, the Man CHRIST JESUS, who gave himself a Ransom for all.* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

I shall trouble you, Gentlemen, no further at this time; but shall conclude this long letter with a prayer for the deluded people of the Church of Rome, *for whom my heart's desire is, that they may be saved.* May their eyes be opened, that they may see their error, and their hearts duly affected with a sense of the profaneness and idolatry of Saint-worship, that they may *turn from these vanities, to serve only the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I am, Gentlemen, your most humble servant,
PHILAE THES.



LETTER II.

THE 15th day of January is observed, by the Carmelites, in honour of St. Paul the hermit; who, retiring from persecution, took up his residence in a cave in the wilderness, where he was fed, three-score years together, by a raven; which every day brought him *half* a loaf; but, having attained the 113th year, St. Anthony came to visit him, and then the raven brought him a *whole* loaf, that there might be enough for both. Paul perceiving the approach of death, sent Anthony for a cloak (which Athanasius had given him) to bury him in. Returning from this message, Anthony saw his soul mounting into heaven amidst the choirs of angels, prophets and apostles; but found his corpse kneeling and head erect, and hands stretched out [a posture most miraculous indeed for a dead man!] And when, according to his friends command, he had wrapped up the body in the cloak, he was at a great loss for a spade to make a grave; but behold, just at that instant, two lions came running out of the forest, full speed, expressing,

expressing, as well as they could, their lamentation for the saint's death [*Ut facile intelligeretur, eos quomodo poterant ploratum edere*] and immediately scraping away the earth with their feet, made a very convenient grave, wherein the corpse was buried by Anthony; but not until the lions were gone; though, as they had shewn so friendly a concern upon the occasion, they might have been invited, methinks, to the funeral.

If your readers should happen to be impertinent enough to ask, how a soul, which is a pure spirit, can be seen by our eyes, the church will silence that question, by commanding them to suppress their curiosity; or, if that will not satisfy them (which, in these days of petulancy, may possibly be the case) she will tell them, that the souls of saints are very distinguishable by their dress; a remarkable instance of which may be found in the office for St. Benedict, on the 21st of March, his soul was observed going into heaven dressed in a very rich mantle or cloak, with lamps glittering all round it [*Pallio ornatum pretiosissimo circum eam fulgentibus lampadibus*]. If any doubt should still remain, you have nothing to do but to wait the publication of Mr. Alban Butler's lives of the Saints, which will soon come out, and then all, you may be sure, will be fully cleared up.

As that ingenious author probably does not confine himself entirely to the histories contained in the Breviary, I hope I shall not be thought to take too great a liberty, if I add the following relation concerning the Order of Mathurines, which not having in my possession the Breviary of that order, I am obliged to take upon other authority, but such as is very little inferior to it.

A. D. 1198, Innocent III. gave the proper habit to Felix de Valoix and John of Mathe, founders of the religious order of the Holy Trinity, or Mathurins; which last name they bear from a place at Paris, where they built their seminary, in which was a chapel, wherein was deposited the body of St. Mathurin,

Mathurin, a Confessor, God knows who, having been brought thither from Rome. The two founders of this order having, through humility, retired to a desert, would have remained there unnoticed and unknown, had not heaven been pleased to bring them upon the theatre of the world, by a most stupendous miracle.

In the woods, near the retreat of these anchorets, was a white hart, which, by long acquaintance, was grown familiar with them. One day, as they were playing with him, they perceived, fixed to his horns, a cross, half blue and half of a reddish purple, which could not but greatly surprise them. After some reflection, John of Mathe accounted for this extraordinary phenomenon, by comparing it with a vision he had on the day he said his first mass; in which he declared that, at the elevation of the Host, he saw an angel cloathed in white raiment, with a cross on his breast, exactly resembling that which was on the hart's horns. Though Felix did not doubt John's sincerity, yet he thought proper to pray for a more explicit revelation; which was soon granted by the ministry of angels. This determined them to go to Rome, to acquaint the Pope with this miracle. The white hart, who attended them, was no expence to them on the road, for he neither eat nor drank during the whole journey. When they arrived at Rome, and were introduced to the Pope, and had the honour of kissing his feet, his Holiness, having been informed of all particulars about the hart, was pleased to enquire for him, and being told that he was at the door, where the porter had stopped him, ordered him to be let in. The doors being opened, the hart entered with a grave countenance, made three bows as he approached his Holiness, and, with great reverence, kissed his slipper three times; and, it is to be presumed, withdrew with the like obeisance as he made when admitted into the presence.

After this extraordinary interposition of heaven in favour of the Mathurines, that order could have no reason

reason to doubt of the continuance of its protection; which, indeed, appears pretty visible in the following instance.

John of Mathe had founded a convent of Nuns in the county of Avignon; soon after which, the winter was so severe, that the country all around was covered with snow, seven or eight feet deep. The poor Nuns, who it seems had laid in no provisions for the winter, and, by the badness of the roads, could then procure none, were soon reduced to the utmost distress. The Mother Abbess, however, in this extremity, setting them an example of that faith which she had before strenuously recommended to them, caused the bell to be rung as usual, to call the Nuns to dinner, who sat down to table, and began to read, in expectation of relief, which they very soon obtained: For, lo! two beautiful young ladies, utterly unknown to any in the convent, brought into the hall great abundance of provisions, of the very best kinds, and then immediately retired; and this they continued to do constantly, every day, until the snow was melted.

The above account is taken from the annals of the order of the Holy Trinity, by Bonaventura Balo, Tom 1. printed in folio at Rome, with permission. Whether it makes a part of Mr. *Alban Butler's* collection or not, his bookseller will certainly be obliged to me for pointing it out to the public at present, as it cannot but excite in your readers an uncommon curiosity and respect for a work of that kind. If it be taken notice of by that learned author, it may be considered as an edifying specimen of his performance; and if, by any accident, it happens to have escaped his diligence, I shall be proud to have contributed so valuable a supplement, which, I doubt not, will be inserted in all future editions of the history of the lives of the saints.

I am, Gentlemen, your most humble servant,

MISOPSEUDES.

F I N I S.



